Gender equality and mainstreaming in the policy and practice of the UK Department for International Development

A briefing from the UK Gender & Development Network

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INTRODUCTION

To prepare information for inclusion in the UK Shadow Report on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the UK Gender and Development Network (GADN) commissioned research in winter 2002—03 on gender equality and mainstreaming in the policy and practice of DFID. This briefing summarises the full report, available from GADN.

The GADN has been active in advocacy and awareness-raising on gender and development since its founding in 1985. The GADN represents 128 UK development organisations, academics, and individuals committed to promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in development.¹

The following methods were used to gather and analyse information for this briefing:
- Desk review of a range of DFID documents, Parliamentary reports, and documents by NGOs and independent consultants;
- Survey of GADN members’ experience of working with DFID and their perceptions of how it addresses gender equality;
- Focus group meeting with GADN members based on findings from the survey;
- Interviews with DFID staff members and consultants who work with DFID;
- Consultation meeting between project steering group members and DFID staff.

The survey questionnaire, completed by GADN members, is necessarily qualitative and to some extent subjective, drawing on the perceptions of GADN members. We consider this an important focus, as it reflects how DFID is seen by key civil society stakeholders.

We have drawn conclusions on how gender is addressed in the project cycle from analysis (see full report) of work in sectors such as governance and rural livelihoods. The research deliberately focused on sectors other than health and education, where gender mainstreaming would not be prompted by specific MDGs/IDTs.

Limited resources and the timeframe imposed by advocacy opportunities have imposed constraints. In particular, we have made no significant contact with staff in the field, and for information on project implementation have relied largely on secondary sources. We hope, however, that our findings give a fairly representative picture of good practice and challenges.

The timing of the project, coinciding with a period of organisational restructuring in DFID, has provided both a constraint and an opportunity: on the one hand, it has been difficult to contact DFID staff, but, on the other, this moment of change offers an opportunity to contribute to dialogue about DFID’s future work. We hope this report raises pertinent questions that can be followed up in subsequent work.

¹ This briefing is published by the GAD Network and does not necessarily reflect the views of all GAD Network members.
### ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPFA</td>
<td>Beijing Platform for Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Country Assistance Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSP</td>
<td>Country Strategy Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee [of the OECD]</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDP</td>
<td>Director’s Delivery Plan</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DFID-B</td>
<td>DFID Bangladesh</td>
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<td>DR</td>
<td>Departmental Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>Economic &amp; Social Council</td>
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<td>EMAD</td>
<td>Europe, Middle East &amp; Americas Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>EvD</td>
<td>Evaluation Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY</td>
<td>financial year</td>
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<tr>
<td>GADN</td>
<td>UK Gender and Development Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>ID Committee</td>
<td>Parliamentary Select Committee on International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDT</td>
<td>International Development Target</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFID</td>
<td>International Financial Institutions Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISP</td>
<td>Institutional Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>MASSAJS</td>
<td>Malawi Safety, Security and Access to Justice</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
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<td>MTR</td>
<td>mid-term review</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organisation</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>OPR</td>
<td>output-to-purpose review</td>
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<td>PETRRA</td>
<td>Poverty Elimination through Rice Research Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIMS</td>
<td>Policy Information Marker System</td>
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<tr>
<td>PME</td>
<td>planning, monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<td>PPA</td>
<td>Partnership Programme Agreement</td>
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<td>PRISM</td>
<td>Performance Reporting Information System for Management</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper [or process]</td>
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<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Service Agreement</td>
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<td>PSIA</td>
<td>Poverty Social Impact Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>Senior Civil Servant</td>
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<td>SDA</td>
<td>Social Development Adviser; (in context of PSA) Service Delivery Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDD</td>
<td>Social Development Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>SID</td>
<td>Statistics on International Development</td>
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<td>SWAP</td>
<td>sector-wide approach</td>
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<td>TOR</td>
<td>terms of reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSP</td>
<td>Target Strategy Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCTAD</td>
<td>United Nations Commission on Trade and Development</td>
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<td>UNGEI</td>
<td>United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative</td>
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UNIFEM  United Nations Development Fund for Women
VAW    violence against women
WB     World Bank
WTO    World Trade Organisation
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poverty, Rights, and Gender Equality in DFID Policy

The research found that DFID’s rights-based approach to development is one of its greatest strengths. Most of the policy and strategy documents recognize gender equality as a prerequisite for poverty elimination. However, the analysis of how gender equality intersects with poverty and rights is not always consistent. Policy/strategy documents vacillate between a rights-based approach to gender equality and one based on efficiency, depending on the sector, with the result that it is not clear if DFID has a common gender analysis or shared understanding of gender mainstreaming. The disaggregation of data is a key problem in the development of a coherent gender analysis. Most of the policy/strategy documents do not disaggregate the category of ‘the poor’, either by sex or by other variables.

The UK is committed to international agreements such as CEDAW and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), yet DFID is not going far enough to fulfil its commitments. Different parts of DFID appear to employ different interpretations of the MDGs and International Development Targets, some using them to promote gender equality widely, with others having a narrow focus on education and health. DFID should continue to take and develop further a broader analytical approach to the power relations between men and women and apply this in all sectors, by interpreting the gender-related MDGs/IDTs as broadly as possible, building on good practice which looks beyond a focus on education and health.

Reviews of Country Strategy Papers, Country Assistance Plans, Director’s Delivery Plans, Public Service Agreements, and Service Delivery Agreements show that these documents’ commitment to gender equality is often patchy or narrowly focused on health and education. There appears to be significant policy evaporation in policy/planning documents. There are, however, examples of innovative practices which could be institutionalised. DFID should work to ensure thorough recognition of gender equality issues and inclusion of actions that go beyond health and education in future Country Strategy Papers, Country Assistance Plans, Director’s Delivery Plans, Public Service and Service Delivery Agreements.

Gender equality and Mainstreaming in DFID Practice

Statistics on British international development assistance show that gender equality work represents a declining proportion of the aid budget. This suggests a steadily declining resource commitment to gender equality. However, the system (Policy Information Marker System) for measuring expenditure on gender-related work may not accurately represent the expenditure, particularly on mainstreaming. DFID should publish and make accessible more detailed information about its expenditure on gender equality by publishing an annual statistical publication relating aid expenditure to PIMS markers, including sex-disaggregated statistics relating both to its programmes and its internal organisation.
An increasing proportion of DFID’s expenditure is on non-project assistance in various forms of direct support to national governments, often connected to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Budgetary support processes offer constraints and opportunities for gender mainstreaming: they are difficult to monitor but offer opportunities for policy dialogue on gender with governments of developing countries. DFID should consider applying a gender budgeting analysis to development assistance channelled through direct budgetary support.

GADN research participants found that DFID’s policy commitments on gender equality have been put into practice unevenly. DFID’s gender policy is under-resourced, better in some regions and sectors than others and dependent on committed individuals. Gender mainstreaming in practice across DFID’s programmes is uneven and evaporation is frequent in the move from policy to practice. Lack of institutionalisation, reflected in the lack of specific systems and structures to ensure mainstreaming, is a key challenge to mainstreaming gender equality in DFID.

DFID should take action against gender policy evaporation in practice by integrating gender analysis into planning tools for all sectors and by monitoring, using gender specialists, key points for inclusion of gender equality in the project cycle, e.g. project planning, monitoring and evaluation, as well as policy formulation.

Institutional Issues in Gender Mainstreaming

DFID currently has no centralized gender unit. All staff are supposed to implement DFID’s gender policy, but in practice, Social Development Advisors substitute as a gender unit. This diffused responsibility often results in gender equality being invisible or dependent on committed individuals. DFID should strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming by forming a thematic team on gender or diversity in the current organisational restructuring. Gender competence should be included in all job descriptions, not just those of Social Development Advisers.

DFID needs to provide capacity-building and learning resources to ensure a critical mass of staff with adequate gender knowledge. Staff capacity and performance on gender should be monitored and incentives should be developed for improving performance. Staff need technical training in gender analysis, methodologies and practical tools, but current core training programmes do not mainstream gender. DFID should mainstream gender in all training courses, develop training tools to address the need for sector-specific technical know-how on gender mainstreaming, and make gender expertise a requirement for all training consultancy teams.

DFID is valued in the donor community for its intellectual rigour, research capacity, and its high-quality information and analysis. However, its high-quality work on gender is not sufficiently disseminated. It is not clear that staff know how to access this information. DFID is encouraged to develop, implement, resource, and maintain an institutional strategy to manage knowledge on gender mainstreaming.
It is not clear whether evaluations, reviews and consultation processes feed into policy or project design. A DFID gender evaluation has been planned since 1998/9 but has been stalled by staff changes/shortages and political commitment. DFID should ensure that resources are allocated for the timely completion of the gender evaluation and other evaluations. It should also discuss progress on gender mainstreaming and gender equality during Parliament’s annual review of DFID.

The number of women in senior management is increasing, although DFID is still far from meeting the 30% target for women in Senior Civil Servant posts. Achieving this target should become a high priority. Rapid staff turnover breaks the continuity in management commitment to gender equality. Diversity is currently receiving attention in DFID. However, the mainstreaming of diversity issues seems to suffer similar constraints, and it is unclear whether DFID has analysed gender in relation to other aspects of diversity.

DFID should define clear high-level responsibility for gender mainstreaming with Ministers, heads of department, and heads of country offices and continue to demonstrate political commitment to this issue.

Dialogue on Gender in External Relations

The shift to non-project development assistance increases the importance of effective policy dialogue between donors and partner governments. The trend has the potential for enabling discussions of gender equality to be introduced at a high political level. Some examples have been cited during this investigation, but more could be done, especially beyond the immediate scope of the International Development Targets. DFID should strengthen its advocacy on gender with the European Community, international financial institutions, and international relief agencies and raise gender equality issues in dialogue with governments of developing countries. Furthermore, it should support women’s machineries in national governments and key gender-focused organisations in civil society.

Relations between DFID and British development NGOs and civil society are relatively open, but there are entry points for furthering productive dialogue and mutual learning. DFID should recognise Programme Partnership Agreements as an entry point for dialogue between DFID and NGOs and an accountability mechanism to encourage gender mainstreaming within NGOs.

Gender Mainstreaming in GADN Member Agencies

The survey of GADN member agencies revealed gaps in their gender knowledge and practice, indicating that members should conduct similar studies in their own organisations. Some GADN member agencies share many institutional features with DFID and common challenges of gender mainstreaming. GADN and DFID should seek ways of working together to confront these challenges. GADN should support gender advocates within DFID, and GADN and DFID should establish regular meetings on gender mainstreaming issues to share information and lessons learned.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this research suggest that DFID should:

1 continue to take and develop further a broader analytical approach to the power relations between men and women and apply this in all sectors, by:
   • interpreting the gender-related MDGs/IDTs as broadly as possible, building on existing good practice which looks beyond the narrow focus on education and health;
   • ensuring thorough recognition of gender equality issues and including actions that go beyond health and education in future Country Strategy Papers, Country Assistance Plans, Director’s Delivery Plans, Public Service Agreements, and Service Delivery Agreements;

2 publish and make accessible more detailed information about its expenditure on gender equality, by:
   • publishing an annual statistical publication relating aid expenditure to PIMS markers;
   • annually publishing sex-disaggregated statistics relating both to programmes and to internal organisation;

3 take action against the risk of gender policy evaporation in practice, by
   • integrating gender analysis into planning tools for all sectors;
   • monitoring, using gender specialists, key points for inclusion of gender equality in the project cycle, e.g. project planning, monitoring and evaluation, as well as policy formulation;
   • considering the application of gender budgeting analysis to development assistance channelled through direct budgetary support;

4 strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming, by:
   • forming a thematic team on gender or diversity in the current organisational restructuring exercise;
   • placing high priority on meeting the target of 30% of women in Senior Civil Service posts;
   • matching its attention to diversity among staff with recognition of diversity in programme work and in particular by analysis of intersections between gender discrimination and other forms of discrimination;
   • monitoring staff capacity and performance on gender in appraisals and developing incentives for improving performance;
   • including gender competence in all job descriptions, not just those of Social Development Advisers;
   • mainstreaming gender in all training courses, developing training modules or other capacity-building tools to address the need for sector-specific technical know-how on gender mainstreaming, and making gender expertise a requirement for all training consultancy teams;
develop, implement, resource, and maintain an institutional strategy to manage knowledge on gender mainstreaming, including:

- identifying what gender-related information is already available in DFID (on web and on paper) and what further information is needed;
- defining or creating effective dissemination channels and entry points for learning and sharing across sectors and regions (e.g. training materials, intranet);
- allocating resources to systematising and maintaining these information sources and channels;

monitor and evaluate its progress on gender mainstreaming, by:

- ensuring the resourcing and timely completion of the gender evaluation and other evaluations;
- discussing progress on gender mainstreaming and gender equality during Parliament’s annual review of DFID;

define clear high-level responsibility for gender mainstreaming with Ministers, heads of department, and heads of country offices, and continue to demonstrate political will by making high-level ministerial statements about the importance of gender equality;

promote gender equality issues in all external relations, including:

- strengthening advocacy on gender with the European Community, international financial institutions, and international relief agencies;
- raising gender equality issues in dialogue with governments;
- supporting women’s machineries in national governments and key gender-related organisations in civil society;
- recognising PPAs as an entry point for dialogue between DFID and NGOs and an accountability mechanism to encourage gender mainstreaming within NGOs.

**Recommendations for joint action by GADN member agencies and DFID**

All the key recommendations in this briefing should also be addressed to GADN’s own organisations. GADN members need to analyse and improve their gender mainstreaming and should conduct a similar investigation with reference to their own member organisations.

GADN and DFID should seek ways of working together to confront difficulties of gender mainstreaming, using international commitments on gender equality and women’s rights as a focus for coherent approaches. GADN should support the voices of gender advocates within DFID.

GADN and DFID should consider establishing regular (annual or bi-annual) meetings on gender mainstreaming issues, aimed at sharing information and lessons learned and promoting progress on gender equality.
Poverty, Rights, and Gender Equality in Policy and Strategy Documents

1 DFID's Approach in Policy and Strategy

Since 1997 poverty reduction has been a central pillar of the UK development assistance programme. The rights-based approach to development is one of DFID’s greatest strengths. Most of the policy and strategy documents, such as the White Papers on Development and the nine Target Strategy Papers, recognize that gender equality is a prerequisite for poverty elimination. However, the analysis of how gender equality intersects with poverty and rights is not always expressed clearly or consistently.

The two White Papers on development move from a rather weak gender analysis in 1997 to a stronger emphasis in 2000 on empowerment and human rights (but without recognizing a clear causal link between globalisation and gender inequality). The Target Strategy Papers also vary in the strength and coherence of their analysis of the relationship between gender inequality and poverty.

A key problem is disaggregation of data. Most of the policy/strategy documents do not disaggregate the category of ‘the poor’ or ‘poor people’, either by sex or by other variables (ethnicity, age, ability, etc.), and thus fail to recognize that poor people across the world are not an undifferentiated bloc but a diverse population whose different needs and interests require different responses from donors. In particular, the tendency in many papers to use sex-disaggregated data only in broad situation analyses (e.g. the global statement that 70% of world’s poorest people are women) impedes the development of a thorough and coherent gender analysis.

Policy and strategy documents vacillate between the rights-based approach and one based on efficiency, depending on the sector. Areas such as economic development tend to stress the efficiency approach, while human rights and governance focus more on rights. The tendency to subsume the policy objective of gender equality under that of poverty reduction can favour an instrumental approach to equality, in which gender equality is desirable, not because it is a right, but because it is good for economic growth.

The dichotomy between the efficiency-based and rights-based approaches is reflected in two contrasting and coexisting ideas of how gender mainstreaming is to be achieved:

- by the integration of women and gender concerns into existing development frameworks and interventions;
- by the transformation of development policy and frameworks from the perspective of gender equality as a right and a development objective in itself.

This suggests that the shift from women as target group to gender equality as an objective has not been completely achieved.
This is a major tension in DFID's gender policy, visible even in the TSP Poverty eradication and women’s empowerment, whose main focus, explicit in the title, is not gender equality but women’s empowerment (although it does include a section on men). This TSP is not particularly coherent with others, although it deals with a cross-cutting issue and contains 10 clear, specific objectives that could inform other sectoral and country issues. TSPs written after it do not routinely refer to it. Some Country Strategy Papers refer to it, but by no means all.

DFID’s rights-based approach to development is embedded in a strong poverty analysis. However, the organic link between poverty reduction, the rights-based approach and gender mainstreaming is not equally clear in all policy and strategy documents. There is a vacillation between rights-based and efficiency-based approaches. It is not clear whether DFID has a common gender analysis or a shared understanding of gender mainstreaming.

**Recommendation**

- DFID should continue to take and develop further a broader analytical approach to the power relations between men and women and apply this in all sectors.

### 2 The International Goals and Targets

The section on gender equality in the 1997 White Paper on development invokes statements from the 1995 World Conference on Women (Beijing) and the 1994 International Conference on Population and Reproductive Health (Cairo). Some policy papers mention the Beijing Platform for Action. The UK is a signatory to international conventions (CEDAW, ILO, etc.) concerning women’s rights and non-discrimination. GADN participants in the research saw DFID as fulfilling international standards moderately.

The **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) and the **International Development Targets** (IDTs) are the international instruments which govern DFID’s policy and strategic planning most closely. Meeting these has become the overriding priority for UK development assistance. As regards gender equality, MDG 3 and IDT 4 (see table 1) have displaced the Beijing Platform for Action as the benchmarks for gender equality in development.
Table 1: International development goals, targets and indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal (MDG 3)</th>
<th>Target (IDT 4)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote gender equality and empower women</td>
<td>Eliminate gender disparity in primary &amp; secondary education preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education no later than 2015</td>
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Indicators for monitoring progress

- Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary & tertiary education;
- Ratio of literate females to males among 15–24-year-olds;
- Share of women in waged employment in non-agricultural sector;
- Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

Both GADN members and some DFID staff interviewed for this project agreed that the choice of education as a proxy indicator for gender equality as a whole is problematic. The target was chosen because certain research has shown that education for girls is the single most effective way of reducing poverty. In practice, however, the use of girls’ education as a proxy indicator, together with the set of IDTs on health and population, which refer particularly to women’s - and not men’s - biological function as reproducers, frequently results in a narrow equation of girls’ education and women’s reproductive health with progress towards gender equality.

As table 1 shows, the system of MDGs and IDTs does contain two other indicators of gender equality, referring to women’s participation in the waged labour force and in political life, but these tend to be ignored in discourse about the IDTs.

While some parts of DFID are using the Millennium Development Goals and International Development Targets as an opportunity for promoting gender equality widely, others are applying them with a narrow focus on education and health, complying with the letter rather than the spirit of the goals and targets.

Recommendation

- DFID should interpret the gender-related MDGs/IDTs as broadly as possible, building on existing good practice which looks beyond the narrow focus on education and health.

3 Gender in Planning Documents and Policies

A recent review of gender in Country Strategy Papers and Country Assistance Plans shows significant policy evaporation. Moreover, evaporation seems greater in the newer generation of CSPs and CAPs than in the first generation of CSPs. These

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papers use insufficient sex-disaggregated data to enable gender planning. Gender issues may be identified in situation analyses but evaporate before reaching the stages of project design and planning. Meaningful connections between the identification of gender-related problems and the definition of strategies and actions for dealing with them are not routinely or systematically drawn. The CAPs and recent CSPs are not coherent with the Target Strategy Paper on Women’s Empowerment, although they postdate it.

The Directors’ Delivery Plans, prepared for each division in DFID, either do not mention gender or focus narrowly on the health- and education-related MDGs/IDTs. Since the DDPs set out most directly what will actually be done in DFID programmes, if gender is not incorporated in the DDP it is unlikely to be ensured in projects or programmes. An exception is the Asia DDP, which uses the MDGs more creatively as a framework within which gender is treated as a key issue.

Recent Public Service Agreements and Service Delivery Agreements also mostly take a narrow focus on the health- and education-related MDGs/IDTs, apart from general and inclusive statements of intent (e.g. ‘equitable and effective systems’, ‘tackle inequality’). The SDA 2003-06 sporadically shows an inclusive approach with potential for work promoting gender equality (e.g. ‘equitable [school] access for girls and boys’; ‘effective and equitable’ health and education systems; ‘address the needs of vulnerable groups and tackle inequality’), but misses opportunities, for instance, to refer to the new MDG3 indicator on women’s participation in national parliaments under PSA target 1, section II (c) on governance. The preceding SDA refers only to equitable access to education for girls and boys in DFID’s top 10 priority countries, but includes a paragraph on mainstreaming gender in its policy and strategy section at the end of the document.

If these documents, rather than the strategy papers, are the chief guides to planning and implementation being used by staff, attention to actions promoting gender equality is far from guaranteed and (beyond the education sector) will continue to depend largely on the commitment and imagination of individual staff members.

The PSAs/SDAs do, however, specify ongoing internal gender equality and diversity targets, e.g. for women in Senior Civil Servant posts.

Documents such as the White Paper on globalisation (DFID, 2000a) do not show a clear recognition of the contradiction between cooperation policies that promote gender equality and trade policies which may perpetuate or increase existing inequalities. GADN questionnaire respondents felt that DFID did not stress gender issues in policies on trade or debt.

There appears to be significant policy evaporation in policy documents and instruments used in planning. In Country Strategy Papers, Country Assistance Plans, Director’s Delivery Plans, the Public Service Agreement, and the Service Delivery Agreement, the commitment to gender equality issues is often patchy or narrowly
focused on health and education issues. There are, however, examples of innovative practice which could be institutionalised throughout DFID.

**Recommendation**
- In future Country Strategy Papers, Country Assistance Plans, Director’s Delivery Plans, Public Service Agreements, and Service Delivery Agreements, DFID should ensure thorough recognition of gender equality issues and include actions that go beyond health and education.
GENDER EQUALITY AND MAINSTREAMING IN DFID PRACTICE

4 Resource Commitments on Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming

Statistics on British international assistance show that work related to gender equality has accounted for a declining proportion of the overall aid budget in recent years, falling from 39.2% in FY 1998/9 to 16.2% in 2001/2. This would seem to suggest a steadily declining commitment to gender equality as reflected in the commitment of resources to it. However, the system for measuring expenditure on gender-related work may not accurately represent the spend, particularly on mainstreaming.

The proportion is calculated using the Policy Information Marker System (PIMS), which classifies budget commitments according to their principal or significant project objectives. The PIMS marker for gender is ‘removal of gender discrimination’. The statistics show that many more projects have this as a significant rather than a principal objective. However, the system cannot be used to gauge the extent of gender mainstreaming in projects which are not given a marker for gender. It is possible, therefore, that the proportion marked for gender underestimates the actual extent of mainstreaming.

PIMS applies only to the UK bilateral aid programme and to commitments of over £100,000, so the system’s coverage is not complete. Although it could theoretically be used as a check on overall progress at key points in the project cycle, it is best as a broad indication of intent and initial commitment.

Analysis of DFID Resource Commitments to Gender Equality

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A valuable exercise in using the PIMS for accountability purposes comes from DFID Bangladesh, where projects PIMS-marked for gender were subsequently checked to see what work on gender they had actually done. This kind of exercise could be replicated in other programmes.

Policy commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming, as reflected in a declining proportion of total commitments to programmes and projects PIMS-marked for gender equality, appears to have weakened since 1998. However, the PIMS may not give an accurate picture.

**Recommendation**

- DFID should publish and make accessible more detailed information about its expenditure on gender equality, by:
  - publishing an annual statistical publication relating aid expenditure to PIMS markers;
  - annually publishing sex-disaggregated statistics relating both to programmes and to internal organisation.

5 **Implementation**

According to GADN research participants, DFID’s generally good vision and policy commitments on gender equality have been put into practice unevenly. Respondents saw the implementation of DFID’s gender policy as under-resourced, better in some regions and sectors than others, and dependent on individuals (usually SDAs) committed to gender equality and mainstreaming. Some DFID staff interviewed concurred broadly with this view, but pointed out that a truer picture of gender mainstreaming in project implementation could be gained by direct contact with activities in the field.5

A number of the existing instruments and tools providing guidance for project design and implementation have good potential for mainstreaming gender equality and should be strengthened so as to embed gender considerations more securely in all stages of the project cycle. For example:

- DFID’s **twin-track approach** combines specific activities aimed at women’s empowerment with mainstreaming gender equality concerns in development

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5 Owing to resource constraints, this section relies on the perceptions of GADN members participating in the survey questionnaire and on some secondary sources such as programme or project reviews. The full report contains a more complete analysis of these findings, including sectoral examples. It has not been possible to make significant contact with DFID staff in the field, and we acknowledge this limitation. The information examined suggests, however, that the conclusions of the country-based analysis by Helen Derbyshire (1999) are still largely valid.
programmes. The effectiveness of this overall strategy is well known and should continue to underpin gender planning.

- **Social appraisal**, carried out for all projects, requires a gender analysis. In theory, the project appraisal process should guarantee that gender issues identified by the social appraisal are fed into project design and from there into implementation. Experience suggests, however, that this does not necessarily happen. Strengthening the procedural link between the social appraisal paragraphs and annex, the project design process and the drafting of the logical framework could help.

- The **Logical Framework** is the main, or only, reference point used in project planning and monitoring. It should always take into account the social appraisal findings on gender, and should contain gender indicators based on these. DFID practice in this respect is improving, as more projects have been including gender in their logframes since 1999.

- **Gender-disaggregated data** are more common in situation analyses than as integral elements of project or programme design. Recent DFID gender reviews recommend the regular collection and use of gender-disaggregated information and indicators in project preparation and monitoring.

While these planning instruments, used carefully and with a gender perspective, can help ensure gender mainstreaming in projects, several participants in this review, both from DFID and GADN, identified the chief challenge to mainstreaming gender equality in DFID as a **lack of institutionalisation**, reflected in the lack of specific systems and structures in DFID to ensure mainstreaming and attention to women’s rights. This is discussed below in section 7, Institutional issues.

Gender mainstreaming in practice across DFID’s programmes is uneven. Although there are many examples of good practice, evaporation is frequent in the move from policy to practice.

**Recommendation**

- DFID should take action against the risk of gender policy evaporation in practice, by:
  - integrating gender analysis into planning tools for all sectors;
  - monitoring, using gender specialists, key points for inclusion of gender equality in the project cycle, e.g. project planning, monitoring and evaluation, as well as policy formulation;
6 Budget Support Processes

An increasing proportion of DFID’s expenditure is being directed towards non-project assistance in the form of sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) or other forms of direct support to national governments connected to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Often this is done in collaboration with other donors.

There is keen debate in DFID as to how to monitor the impact, including the gender impact, of assistance at a sector level and further upstream in budgetary support. Addressing gender equality in direct budgetary support to governments is seen as both harder and easier than in project-based assistance: harder, because accountability through monitoring highly aggregated expenditure allocations is harder to achieve; easier, because direct support offers the possibility of direct policy dialogue with governments, including dialogue on gender equality. Support to gender budgeting processes and recent DFID work raising gender questions in poverty social impact analysis (PSIA) are good practice examples in this field.

In light of DFID’s institutional commitment to promoting gender equality, it will be important for DFID to develop systems for monitoring budgetary support processes and to work towards strengthening the gender perspective in PRSPs.

Budgetary support processes offer both constraints and opportunities for gender mainstreaming and women’s human rights: they are difficult to monitor but offer opportunities for policy dialogue on gender with governments.

Recommendation

- DFID should consider applying a gender budgeting analysis to development assistance channelled through direct budgetary support.

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7 Institutionalising Gender in DFID

Many participants in this review have identified lack of institutionalisation as the main challenge to gender mainstreaming in DFID. DFID has no programme or time-bound plan of action on gender equality and mainstreaming. There is little evidence that the 10 gender objectives in the TSP on women's empowerment are used regularly as a project design or planning tool.

All staff are supposed to contribute to the implementation of DFID’s commitments to gender equality but this diffused responsibility too often results in gender equality being not mainstreamed but invisible. Gender mainstreaming is perceived as being dependent on committed individuals. The capacity of staff in general to carry out a thorough gender analysis and to plan strategically from a gender perspective needs strengthening.

At present, DFID has no centralized gender unit. Responsibility for gender is incorporated into all work units by means of the network of Social Development Advisers (SDAs), who have gender expertise as a core element of their job description and are coordinated by a SD staff member in London.

While inserting gender expertise at strategic points in this way should, theoretically, ensure mainstreaming, experience has shown that this does not necessarily happen. Strategically-placed gender experts need a central, dedicated resource to support them, creating a twin structure (gender-specific and gender mainstreamed) corresponding to the twin-track approach to implementing DFID’s gender equality policy.

Before the restructuring of the Policy Division, the Social Development Department itself substituted for a gender unit, but suffered from many of the constraints cited as reasons for not having a gender unit: small size, concentration of expertise and under-resourcing. SDAs are the repositories of gender knowledge and the people solely responsible for it, while other staff are in effect ‘let off the hook’. This tendency is evident right from the start of the project cycle: since SDAs are responsible for conducting the social appraisal of all projects and embedding it in the project submission document, other staff involved in drawing up the project submission can ignore social and gender issues. SDAs give advice, but have no control over funds, so their advice on gender can be ignored by managers when funds are being allocated. The result is ghettoisation of gender issues rather than mainstreaming throughout DFID.

Meanwhile, there is widespread anxiety that senior management commitment to gender equality is dwindling.
Commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming in DFID is strong but lacks institutionalisation. Many staff are doing good and innovative gender-related work, but sustained attention to gender is still very dependent on committed individuals. Despite the stated intention that all staff should be responsible for gender mainstreaming, it is largely left to Social Development Advisers. This militates against mainstreaming. Many DFID staff, as well as external advocates, continue to see the need in DFID for an adequately resourced, centralized gender equality unit with specialist staff, as well as ensuring that all staff have responsibility for gender mainstreaming.

**Recommendation**

- DFID should consider forming a thematic team on gender or diversity in the current organisational restructuring exercise. Both a specialized gender unit and mainstreaming are necessary, as experience from other institutions has shown.

### 8 Human Resources

Although DFID is still far from meeting the target of 30% for women in Senior Civil Servant posts, the number of **women in senior management** is gradually increasing. The current Permanent Secretary is making a deliberate effort to achieve this and to increase diversity in management posts. Staff-friendly policies such as flexible working hours are being introduced alongside the existing equal opportunities policy.

**Diversity** is the aspect of organisational development currently receiving the most serious attention in DFID. Following a diversity review and action plan, diversity targets in staffing have been set and a diversity team with monitoring and information-gathering functions created. Diversity training is a compulsory element of management training, but needs further development (see below, Training). Attention to diversity has clear relevance to DFID’s local staff in its overseas offices.

However, the mainstreaming of diversity issues in DFID’s external programme work seems to suffer similar constraints as gender mainstreaming. While the diversity agenda has the advantage of drawing attention to rights and discrimination, the MDGs and IDTs are silent on diversity; gender discrimination is the only discrimination they recognize. Externally commissioned papers have been written for DFID on disability and ageing, respectively, and development. But it is unclear to what extent DFID has yet analysed **gender in relation to other aspects of diversity**.
Despite positive efforts, the DFID target for women in Senior Civil Service posts is still far from being met. Rapid staff turnover at higher levels breaks continuity in management commitment to gender equality. Diversity issues in internal organisational development are receiving close attention in DFID. However, this needs to be matched by recognition of diversity in programme work and in particular by analysis of intersections between gender discrimination and other forms of discrimination.

**Recommendations**

- DFID should place high priority on meeting the target of 30% of women in Senior Civil Service posts.
- DFID’s attention to diversity among staff should be matched by recognition of diversity in programme work and in particular by analysis of intersections between gender discrimination and other forms of discrimination.

**9 Capacity and Training**

Gender analysis is a core competency for all Social Development Advisors, but only for SDAs. Increasingly, new staff entering DFID have gained some knowledge of gender issues at university, but levels of knowledge and competency are very mixed, and new or young staff do not necessarily have technical skills in gender analysis and planning. Since gender is defined as everyone’s responsibility, DFID needs to provide capacity-building and learning resources to ensure a critical mass of staff with adequate gender knowledge.

DFID no longer conducts specific gender training courses. It seeks instead to incorporate gender elements into training courses ‘where relevant’. However, it is not clear that the current training succeeds in mainstreaming gender concerns, and the trainers do not always have gender expertise.

A current consultancy looking at the ways gender is addressed in DFID’s core training courses has found that the level at which gender is integrated into them does not match DFID’s policy statements on the relation between gender inequality and poverty. None of the current courses contains specific modules on gender, except for the poverty training, where it is optional. However, there are many points where gender issues could be raised in the training and gender-related case studies more widely used.

Beyond Social Development Advisors, adequate gender competence is not guaranteed. Even among SDAs, it is very variable and is not prioritised to the same degree by all SDAs. Current core training programmes do not mainstream gender. However, opportunities and entry points for mainstreaming gender exist in all
training courses and should be seized. Young professional staff need specific technical training in gender analysis, methodologies and practical tools as well as, or rather than, introductory gender training.

**Recommendations**
DFID should strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming by:

• monitoring staff capacity and performance on gender in appraisals and developing incentives for improving performance;
• including gender competence in all job descriptions, not just those of Social Development Advisers;
• mainstreaming gender in all training courses, developing training modules or other capacity-building tools to address the need for sector-specific technical know-how on gender mainstreaming, and making gender expertise a requirement for all training consultancy teams.

**10 Information and Knowledge Management**

DFID is valued in the donor community for its intellectual rigour, research capacity, and its production of information and analysis of high quality. This applies to certain key documents specifically on women and gender.

A good deal of gender-related information can be found on websites belonging to DFID or partly funded by it. Funding for the GEM website (coordinated by BRIDGE at the Institute of Development Studies) has declined since 1998/9, and ceased to be available in April 2003. BRIDGE’s website Genie and other web-based resources run by BRIDGE will provide comparable resources. The Social Development Department’s library contains gender materials and updates staff on relevant new acquisitions.

However, the sporadic and inconsistent gender analysis found in many documents suggests that the existing high-quality work on gender is not sufficiently disseminated. There is a need not for more good information and research on gender issues but for more **systematic management of the existing gender information**, particularly gender-disaggregated statistical information. There is also a need for a centralized record of what is being done on gender in different parts of DFID in the UK and overseas, to facilitate institutional memory and learning through good practice.

DFID possesses plenty of gender-related information in both paper and electronic form. It is not clear, however, that all staff know what information resources on gender exist or how to access them.
**Recommendations**

- DFID should develop, implement, resource, and maintain an institutional strategy to manage knowledge on gender mainstreaming, including:
  - identifying what gender-related information is already available in DFID (on web and on paper) and what further information is needed;
  - defining or creating effective dissemination channels and entry points for learning and sharing across sectors and regions (e.g. training materials, intranet);
  - allocating resources to systematising and maintaining these information sources and channels;

**Accountability**

A number of gender-related reviews of DFID programmes have been carried out in recent years. Together they form a useful body of evidence about the successes and challenges of gender mainstreaming in DFID. A recent consultancy has analysed these reviews as the UK’s contribution to a gender ‘meta-evaluation’ commissioned by the OECD-DAC.

It is not clear, however, to what extent and in what ways evaluations, reviews, and consultation processes are followed up and fed into subsequent policy or project design. Although there is evidence that this sometimes occurs, follow-up appears to be variable.

The PIMS marker system is not a refined tool for tracking progress on gender mainstreaming. The PRISM monitoring system appears to offer no obvious space for measuring performance on gender equality or mainstreaming.

A general **DFID gender evaluation** has been in the pipeline since 1998/9, but has been stalled first by staff changes and more recently by shortage of human resources and political commitment. Preparatory work is being done, and the GADN hopes that resources will become available to carry out the full evaluation.

DFID evidence about the successes and challenges of gender mainstreaming does not appear to systematically feed into policy and programme design. There is a need for demonstrated high-level political commitment to DFID’s policy of gender mainstreaming.

**Recommendations**

- DFID should monitor and evaluate its progress on gender mainstreaming, by:
  - ensuring the resourcing and timely completion of the gender evaluation and other evaluations;
  - discussing progress on gender mainstreaming and gender equality during Parliament’s annual review of DFID;
• DFID should define clear high-level responsibility for gender mainstreaming with Ministers, heads of department, and heads of country offices, and continue to demonstrate political will by making high-level ministerial statements about the importance of gender equality;
DIAGNOSE ON GENDER IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

12 Dialogue on Gender with International and Multilateral Agencies, Partner Governments, and NGOs

About half of DFID’s development assistance is channelled through multilateral development agencies. Important relationships specifically referring to gender equality are those with UNIFEM and the OECD-DAC.

DFID has a **good reputation in the donor community** as a leader in the promotion of gender equality. It has for some years been vice-chair of the DAC gender working group and took a key role in the production of the DAC gender guidelines and sourcebook (1998). It was active around the Beijing + 5 process. Its work with UNIFEM, particularly on violence against women, is extensive, and it is also working with other multilaterals and with partner governments on this issue.

The International Strategy Papers outlining DFID’s formal relationships with multilateral agencies do not refer much to gender. However, much of the work DFID does in multilateral bodies is advocacy, and it has taken some opportunities to raise gender concerns with other multilaterals such as the European Community and the World Bank and at UN conferences. This reputation and experience could be built upon and broadened further.

The shift to non-project development assistance increases the importance of effective **policy dialogue between donors and partner governments**. The trend has the potential for enabling discussions of gender equality to be introduced at a high political level. Some examples have been cited in the course of this investigation, but there is space for much more to be done, especially beyond the immediate scope of the IDTs. DFID can also play an important role in strengthening women’s or gender machineries in national governments and organisations working for gender equality in civil society.

Findings from the GADN survey confirm that **relations between DFID and British development NGOs and civil society** are relatively open. In their ongoing relationships of advocacy and dialogue with DFID, many GADN member agencies have found DFID interlocutors reasonably accessible, though they have not always concluded that their advice was put into practice. For many GADN member NGOs, the Partnership Programme Agreement is the main channel for interaction with DFID.

Specifically as regards gender, the GADN focus group concluded that the GADN—DFID relationship on gender needs to be more coherent, and entry points for

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7 DAC, Guidelines for gender equality and women’s empowerment in development cooperation, 1998; Sourcebook on concepts and approaches linked to gender equality, 1998.
productive dialogue should be identified or strengthened. GADN’s meeting with DFID in the context of this briefing was positive and, it is hoped, increases the space for such a dialogue.

DFID has a good reputation as a leading bilateral development agency on gender and development, on which it can build to promote attention to gender equality both with partner governments and other bilateral and multilateral donors. This is particularly important given the space for high-level political dialogue created through a shift to direct budgetary support. There are entry points that should be explored for developing more coherent, productive dialogue and mutual learning between the GADN and DFID.

**Recommendations**

DFID should:

- strengthen advocacy on gender with the European Community, international financial institutions, and international relief agencies;
- maximize opportunities for raising gender equality issues in dialogue with governments;
- support women’s machineries in national governments and key gender-related organisations in civil society.
- recognise PPAs as an entry point for dialogue between DFID and NGOs and an accountability mechanism to encourage gender mainstreaming within NGOs.
GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN GADN MEMBER AGENCIES

13 Critical reflections on gender mainstreaming in civil society organisations

The survey of GADN member agencies revealed significant gaps in their own gender knowledge and practice; key findings are summarised below:

- Only those GADN member organisations specifically dedicated to gender or women mentioned gender equality in their summary mission statements.
- At least two members did not complete the questionnaire because their organisations had little or no interaction with DFID on gender issues. One said gender was ‘not one of our strengths vis-à-vis DFID’ and ‘not a legitimate area of our influence on DFID’; another said that ‘gender mainstreaming in its own right is not a specific focus for [the agency’s] external advocacy with DFID at present.’
- 4/11 respondents were unable to comment on DFID’s progress as regards gender because they were not up to date on DFID gender policy developments.
- A number of respondents did not know in detail whether DFID required evidence of attention to gender equality as a criterion for funding or how this was followed up. This could suggest either that GADN members ought to inform themselves better on gender issues in the funding relationship with DFID, or that the people working in gender are not always involved in applications for DFID funding or consulted by fundraising staff.
- Desk research revealed that among 34 submissions of evidence to ID Select Committee in 1997 on the first White Paper, only one major development agency not devoted to women or gender mentioned gender systematically (or at all), but in 1998/9, when gender was the subject of the ID Committee’s report and the accompanying submissions, many of the same agencies made substantial comments. This suggests a gap in mainstreaming, with the NGOs only raising gender-related considerations when prompted to do so.

Governments, civil society, and donors sharing the goal of gender equality can learn much from each other. GADN member agencies, particularly the larger ones, share with DFID many institutional features and therefore many of the challenges of gender mainstreaming.

Recommendations for joint action by GADN member agencies and DFID

- All the key recommendations in this briefing should also be addressed to GADN’s own organisations. GADN members need to analyse and improve their gender mainstreaming and should conduct a similar investigation with reference to their own member organisations.
• GADN and DFID should seek ways of working together to confront difficulties of gender mainstreaming, using international commitments on gender equality and women’s rights as a focus for coherent approaches. GADN should explore ways to support the voices of gender advocates within DFID.

• DFID and the GADN should consider establishing regular (annual or bi-annual) meetings on gender mainstreaming issues, aimed at sharing information and lessons learned and promoting progress on gender equality.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: People consulted

The following people contributed to the completion of this study, through email correspondence, telephone interviews, questionnaire responses, and/or participation in meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<td>Joan Mason</td>
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APPENDIX TWO: Documents consulted

**International Gender Equality Standards**

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